

# Introduction to Men's Artistic Gymnastics

## Foundations, Skill Progressions, and Basic Routines

### Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a starting point for those interested in learning Men's Artistic Gymnastics. Although the specific audience is adults in NAIGC Developmental learning for the first time, the principles can be applied to a broader audience. Hopefully this document, along with advice from others in your gym, can provide a guide from starting Developmental to progressing to Level 9. Please look to the [NAIGC website](#) for more information on NAIGC specific rules.

### Introduction

While the progressions given below are by no means the only way, most high level gymnasts followed these general foundations and skills progressions. You can always customize your gymnastics training to fit your strengths. For most adults, the easiest events to reach a Level 9 routine are Floor and Vault, as the foundation of running and jumping is something most everyone can already do. The next easiest to learn are Parallel Bars and Rings, where the foundation of swinging and support strength can be developed relatively quickly. The most difficult events to reach a Level 9 routine are Horizontal Bar and Pommel Horse. At a higher level, the foundation of both events, giants and circles respectively, are a difficult skill in their own right and can take more than a year to learn.

### Structure

Initially, the development philosophy is described followed by the most important flexibility and strength to develop. Next there are three levels of foundations to work on of increasing difficulty. I would recommend only proceeding to the next level when you are proficient and the current one. Furthermore, continue to work these foundational skills even after you have progressed beyond them. Next, the first skills typically learned are given in three stages, divided by the element group. The numbers next to each skill refer to the number in the FIG Code of Points ([link](#)). The division is based on the typical spot in one's gymnastics that a skill is learned, not simply the order. For instance, while a rear vault is the first release learned on horizontal bar, it is trained after having a back uprise support. The following row provides additional atypical skills sometimes seen, followed by the next skills typically learned and a list of all current NAIGC non-FIG skills. Finally, three simple routines are given with progressing difficulty. The second column gives the element's value and the third lists the element group. The final start value is also given.

### Important Note

Starting gymnastics without a dedicated coach can be difficult, confusing and demoralizing. Hopefully this guide can help clear up some of that uncertainty and provide a useful tool as your gymnastics develops. ***Gymnastics is an inherently dangerous activity and the participant should follow these progressions at their own risk. NAIGC, its officers, volunteers and agents, do not assume liability for any injuries (including death) which may result from following the progressions outlined in this guide.***

For any additional questions, please contact [rules@naigc.org](mailto:rules@naigc.org) or connect through the [NAIGC Skills and Drills](#) Facebook group.

# Floor Exercise

Floor is one of the easiest events to start learning. Initial stages focus on developing a proper hurdle, round off and handstands.

Flexibility	Strength	
Splits Pancake Cat stretch Bridge	Plyometrics Calf raises Squats/Frog jumps/Lunge jumps/Box jumps Hanging leg raises Arch ups Handstands	
Foundation 1	Foundation 2	Foundation 3
Round-off drill (cartwheel step to feet together) Forward roll Backward roll Handstand against wall Lunge needle kick (lever) Power hurdle to lunge Handstand fall to flat back on soft mat	Power hurdle (broad jump) to round-off Lunge handstand forward roll Forward roll jump to handstand (tucked or straddled) Small dive roll (tumble track) Backward roll with straight arms to push up position (on cheese) Lunge handstand hop Practice transitions	Run hurdle round-off rebound (should move mostly backwards) Lunge handstand (hold) forward roll Run punch boulder (hands on mat) off tumble track Forward roll jump to handstand (piked) Run punch dive roll (tumble track) Run punch front flip (tumble track) Backward roll with straight arms to handstand (on cheese) Practice transitions
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<u>NAIGC Exceptions (No EG):</u> Cartwheel Round-Off Pike up through handstand  <u>Element Group 1:</u> 19: Handstand 61: Split 67: Scale  <u>Element Group 2:</u> 13: Dive Roll  <u>Element Group 3:</u> None	<u>Element Group 1:</u> 31: Pirouette  <u>Element Group 2:</u> 19: Front Tuck  <u>Element Group 3:</u> 1. Back tuck or pike 37: Arabian Dive Roll	<u>Element Group 1:</u> 7: Press handstand from straddle stand 121: Backward roll through handstand with ½ turn  <u>Element Group 2:</u> 20: Front layout 31: Front tuck (or pike) with ½ twist  <u>Element Group 3:</u> 2. Back layout 8: Back layout with half twist

# Floor Exercise (cont)

Other Options	Future Skills	All NAIGC Exceptions
<p><u>Element Group 1:</u> 25: Straddle planche 79: Butterfly 85: Breakdance windmills</p> <p><u>Element Group 2:</u> 7: Front handspring (skip if you lack back and shoulder flexibility)</p> <p><u>Element Group 3:</u> 13: Back handspring (skip if you lack back and shoulder flexibility)</p>	<p><u>Element Group 1:</u> 14. Press from prone or split 20: Press to wide arm handstand 21: Press to wide arm from split 44. Endo roll to handstand</p> <p><u>Element Group 2:</u> 32: Front tuck 1/1 twist 38: Front layout ½ twist 39: Front layout 1/1 twist</p> <p><u>Element Group 3:</u> 28: Back layout 1/1 twist 21: Back layout 3/2 twist</p>	<p><u>A value (No Element Group):</u> Cartwheel Round-Off Pike up through handstand Backward roll through handstand</p> <p><u>A value:</u> Any side aerial (EG 2)</p>

## Routines

Numbers refer to pass | V = Value | EG = Element Group | SV = Start Value

Routine A			Routine B			Routine C		
Skill	V	EG	Skill	V	EG	Skill	V	EG
1. Round off straight jump	A	-	1. Front tuck	A	2	1. Front Layout	B	2
2. Back extension to prone	A	-	2. Dive roll Transition	A	2	Pike up to handstand	A	-
3. Press to headstand	A	1	3. Round off rebound	A	-	2. Front tuck	A	2
4. Scale	-	-	Arabian dive roll	A	3	3. Round off	A	-
Transition	A	2	Scale	A	1	Back tuck	A	3
5. Dive roll	A	-	4. Round off	A	-	Scale	A	1
Transition	A	4	Back tuck	A	4	4. Round off	-	-
6. Front Tuck						Back Layout	B	4
Developmental SV=12.1			Developmental SV=12.1			Developmental SV=12.3		
			Level 9 SV: 12.8 (add cartwheel and handstand)			Level 9 SV: 13.0 (add cartwheel and handstand)		

# Pommel Horse

Pommel Horse is one of the most challenging events for beginners to develop. The main goal is learning a correct circle. However, since that can take years, it is also important to develop a strong stride and pendulum swings so that a routine can be constructed with mostly scissoring elements.

Flexibility	Strength	
Splits German stretch Shoulders Pancake Wrist flexibility	Support Strength Hollow hold Arch hold Handstands Straight arm plank (front, back and side supports) Hip Flexors Wrist Strength	
Foundation 1	Foundation 2	Foundation 3
Pendulum Swings (legs reach horizontal) Stride Swings (one leg in front, back leg swings to horizontal) Hold top position of stride swing Standing leg swings (stand on one leg, hold pommels and swing other leg) Walking in support around horse Walking through mushroom positions Plank strengthening at each quarter position ¼ circle on mushroom	Pendulum Swings (legs reach above horizontal) Stride Swings (front leg straight, back leg swings above horizontal) Leg cuts (all directions) Single leg travel Mushroom with bucket ½ circle on mushroom	Pendulum Swings (legs reach above horizontal, display weight transfer, lifting non-post hand) Stride Swings (front leg straight, back leg above horizontal, display weight transfer, lifting non-post hand) Leg cuts (all directions, swing to separate ribs from upper arm) False scissors Scissors More mushroom with bucket Attempt full circles on mushroom for weeks and weeks
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Circles on mushroom (5-10) Circles on floor mushroom (up to 5)  <u>NAIGC Exceptions (No EG):</u> False Scissor Single Leg Stockli Single leg travel ½ circle dismount  <u>Element Group 1:</u> 1. Scissor  <u>Element Group 2:</u> None  <u>Element Group 3:</u> None  <u>Element Group 4:</u> None	Circles on floor mushroom (5-10)  <u>Element Group 1:</u> 7. Scissor with ½ turn 13: Scissor backward  <u>Element Group 2:</u> 1. Circle 13. Loop  <u>Element Group 3:</u> None  <u>Element Group 4:</u> 1. Wende	<u>Element Group 1:</u> 8. Scissor with hop (optional ½ turn)  <u>Element Group 2:</u> More than 1 circle at a time  <u>Element Group 3:</u> None  <u>Element Group 4:</u> 20. Circle through handstand (only if you can already do a press)

# Pommel Horse (cont)

Other Options	Future Skills	All NAIGC Exceptions
N/A	<p><u>Element Group 1:</u> 9. Scissor with hop from one end to other 3/3 14. Double scissor 15. Double scissor with hop</p> <p><u>Element Group 2:</u> 91: Schwabenflank 92: Czechkehre (moore)</p> <p><u>Element Group 3:</u> 1. Side travel</p> <p><u>Element Group 4:</u> 8. 360 russian to wende 20. Circle through handstand</p>	<p><u>A value</u> (No Element Group): False Scissor Single Leg Stockli Single Leg Travel ½ Circle Dismount</p> <p><u>C value:</u> Any combination of two flops on one pommel</p> <p><u>D value:</u> ¾ Kehr to one pommel (¾ Sohn) to immediate ¾ Reverse Stockli (Element Group 2)</p>

## Routines

V = Value | EG = Element Group | SV = Start Value

Routine A			Routine B			Routine C		
Skill	V	EG	Skill	V	EG	Skill	V	EG
Leg cut	-	-	Single leg travel	A	-	Loop	A	2
Scissor hop (hop ½)	B	1	Leg cut	-	-	Single leg stockli	A	-
Single leg stockli	A	-	False scissor	A	-	Leg cuts	-	-
Leg cut	-	-	Pendulum swing	-	-	Scissor ½	A	1
Pendulum swing	-	-	Leg cut	-	-	Leg cuts	-	-
Leg cut, false scissor	A	-	Scissor hop (hop ½)	B	1	Circle	A	2
Leg cut, stride swing	-	-	Single leg stockli	A	-	Side travel	A	3
Scissor	A	1	Feint	-	-	Schwabenflank	A	2
Leg cuts	-	-	Circle	A	2	Handstand Dismount	B	4
Single leg travel	A	-	Circle 1/2	A	4	Developmental SV: 12.2 Level 9 SV: 12.8 (with false scissor)		
½ circle dismount	A	4	Developmental SV=12.2					
Developmental SV=11.7								

# Still Rings

While Still Rings is considered a strength based event, at the early stages, it is most important to develop excellent swings followed by strong support and handstand strength. Grips are important once the gymnast begins to inlocate and dislocate above ring height.

Flexibility	Strength	
Shoulders (full range of motion) Dislocates and inlocates with broomstick Cat stretch German stretch Pike Pancake Middle splits	Chin ups Dips Support strength Planches Handstands Arch/Hollow hold	
Foundation 1	Foundation 2	Foundation 3
Support hold (5-10 seconds) Tucked L sit support (5-10 seconds) Hanging L sit (5-10 seconds) Inverted hang Basket Shoulder mobility exercises ( <a href="#">link</a> ) Basic Swings (straight legs!)	Support hold with rings out (10-20 seconds) L sit support (5-10 seconds) Swing forward to inverted hang Shoulder mobility exercises ( <a href="#">link</a> ) False grip chin ups (chest to rings) Ring Dips Basic Swings with rings turning correctly Flyaway into loose foam pit	Support hold with rings out (20-30 seconds) L sit support with rings out (10-15 seconds) Partial tuck planche rings at least parallel (5-10 seconds) False grip chin ups (chest to rings) Ring Dips Swings above horizontal (legs and arms straight, lift in front and back)
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
-Continue working swings -Practice handstands with straps  <u>NAIGC Exceptions:</u> Shoulderstand from L Tuck Planche  <u>Element Group 1:</u> None  <u>Element Group 2:</u> 1. L sit  <u>Element Group 3:</u> None  <u>Element Group 4:</u> Back tuck	-Continue working swings -Handstands w/ feet on inside of straps  <u>NAIGC Exceptions:</u> Muscle Up  <u>Element Group 1:</u> 73. Backward roll to support  <u>Element Group 2:</u> 7. Back lever 31. Roll forward to support  <u>Element Group 3:</u> None  <u>Element Group 4:</u> 25. Back pike or layout	-Continue working swings -Handstand without straps  <u>Element Group 1:</u> 1. Front Uprise to support 7. Forward roll to swing 31. Dislocate 37. Back uprise 43. Inlocate 55. Kip to support  <u>Element Group 2:</u> 7. Front lever 25. Bent arm bent body press  <u>Element Group 3:</u> 2. Front uprise to L sit 8. Kip to L sit  <u>Element Group 4:</u> 1. Front Layout 26. Back layout with ½ twist

# Still Rings (cont)

Other Options	Future Skills	All NAIGC Exceptions
<p><u>Element Group 1:</u> 61. Back kip to support 67. Forward support swing bail to swing backwards in hang</p>	<p><u>Element Group 1:</u> 1. Front Uprise 25. Felge to support</p> <p><u>Element Group 2:</u> 8. Straddle Planche 14. Cross 26. Hollow back or straight arm press 32. Stretched forward roll to support 50. Muscle up to back lever</p> <p><u>Element Group 3:</u> 33. Back uprise cross 51. Kip cross 69. Back uprise straddle planche</p> <p><u>Element Group 4:</u> 2. Front Layout ½ 19. Back uprise back tuck 26. Back layout ½ or full 32. Double back tuck</p>	<p>A value (No Element Group): Muscle Up Shoulderstand (2 s.) Back uprise to shoulderstand (2 s.) Felge to shoulderstand (2 s.) Tuck Planche (2 s.)</p> <p>A value: Tuck or pike salto, front or back (Element Group 4) Uprise bwd to tuck planche (2 s.) (Element Group 3)</p>

## Routines

V = Value | EG = Element Group | SV = Start Value

Routine A			Routine B			Routine C		
Skill	V	EG	Skill	V	EG	Skill	V	EG
Muscle Up	A	-	Inlocate	A	1	Kip to L sit	B	3
Tuck planche	A	-	Back uprise	A	1	Forward roll to hang	A	2
L sit	A	2	L sit	A	2	Back uprise support	A	1
Shoulder stand	A	-	Shoulderstand	A	-	Backward roll to support	A	1
Back lever (or fwd or bwd roll)	A	2	Back lever	A	2	Dislocate	A	1
Swing back tuck	A	4	Swing back layout	A	4	Back layout	A	4
Developmental SV: 11.6			Developmental SV: 12.1			Developmental SV: 12.2 Level 9 SV: 12.9 (with inlocate and backlever)		

# Vault

While the initial vaults are relatively simple to learn, progressing past simple handsprings or round offs is difficult and requires good development of running, board work and blocking.

Flexibility	Strength	
Cat stretch Bridge	Handstands Handstands with shoulder shrugs Running Calf raises Squats/frog jumps/lunge jumps/box jumps Arch ups Hanging leg raises	
Foundation 1	Foundation 2	Foundation 3
Step hurdle on floor Run hurdle onto board straight jump Handstands Kick handstand flatback Round offs on floor Arch ups	Run handstand flat backs (on stacked mats) Blocking drills	Run hurdle onto board front tuck Front handsprings on floor Bounders on tumble track/tramp Blocking drills FHS over blocks/resi with board or mini tramp
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
101. Front handspring 220. Round off	Improved technique Handspring or round off onto stacked mats (land on feet)	102. Front handspring with twist ½ or full (103) 221. Round off with twist ½ or full (222) Handspring or round off onto stacked mats (work up to over rotating)
Other Options	Future Skills	All NAIGC Exceptions
	107. Handspring front tuck 225. Tsuk tuck	

## Routines

Routine A	Routine B	Routine C
Front handspring Or round off  Developmental SV: 11.6 Level 9 SV: 11.6	Front handspring with twist ½ Or Round off with twist ½  Developmental SV: 11.8 Level 9 SV: 11.8	Tsukahara tucked  Developmental SV: 12.2 Level 9 SV: 12.2



# Parallel Bars

After Floor and Vault, Parallel Bars is probably the easiest event to first learn. Initial development focuses on correct technique over four types of swings: support, upper arm, glide and basket. With good swing technique, the first skills can be learned relatively quickly.

Flexibility	Strength	
German stretch Pike Pancake Seal stretch Cat stretch	Planks Hollow/Arch hold Arch ups L sit Upper arm shrugs Dips Handstands (normal and one arm) Handstand push ups Push ups	
Foundation 1	Foundation 2	Foundation 3
Support swings (less than horizontal) Upper arm swings Glide swings Basket Swings Tucked L sit Handstand with parallettes against wall	Support swings (above horizontal) Upper arm swings Upper arm push ups Glide swings kip to upper arm Basket Swings L sit Handstand with parallettes against wall	Support swings (above 45 degrees) Upper arm swings Assisted front uprise (feet on bars) Glide swings kip to upper arm Basket Swings Handstand with parallettes Swing through handstand on end of bars land on mat
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<u>NAIGC Exceptions:</u> Back uprise to support Stutz dismount  <u>EG 1:</u> 1. Handstand 7. L- sit  <u>EG 2:</u> 1. Front Uprise  <u>EG 3:</u> 61. Glide kip  <u>EG 4:</u> None	<u>NAIGC Exceptions:</u> Wende dismount  <u>EG 1:</u> None  <u>EG 2:</u> None  <u>EG 3:</u> 97. Cast to upper arm hang  <u>EG 4:</u> None	<u>NAIGC Exceptions:</u> Moy to upper arm Stutz to support Back tuck dismount  <u>EG 1:</u> 13. Straddle cut fwd 79. Pirouette  <u>EG 2:</u> 55. Back uprise straddle cut with bent arms  <u>EG 3:</u> 115. Peach to long hang None  <u>EG 4:</u> None



# High Bar

The main initial goal of horizontal bar is learning back and front giants. To achieve this takes significant work with tap swings and strap bar. Other important foundational skills are kips and back uprisers. Grips are necessary before learning giants (make sure they are sized properly, long grips break wrists!).

Flexibility	Strength	
Pike Pancake Seal stretch Cat stretch Shoulders	Hollow hold Arch hold Hanging leg raises Arch ups Handstands	
Foundation 1	Foundation 2	Foundation 3
Hollow hold Arch hold Hanging leg raises Arch ups Handstands	Tap swings (approaching horiz.) Tap swings in strap bar (above horiz., try with ankle weights) Chin up pull over Casts (above horizontal) Back hip circle Underbar swing (is this glide swings? Should include here) Half turn Back extension roll to handstand (straight arm)	Tap swings to flyaway Casts (to handstand) Free hip to horizontal Back giants in strap bar Front giants in strap bar Baby giants Kip drills Stem
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
NAIGC Exceptions: Back uprise to support Kip to support Back hip circle Swing ½ turn Pull over Cast to horizontal  <u>EG 1:</u> None  <u>EG 2:</u> None  <u>EG 3:</u> None  <u>EG 4:</u> Tucked flyaway	Cast Handstand Kip cast horizontal Free hip circle to horizontal  <u>EG 1:</u> 31. Back Giant  <u>EG 2:</u> None  <u>EG 3:</u> None  <u>EG 4:</u> 25. Pike or layout flyaway	<u>EG 1:</u> 13. Front Giant  <u>EG 2:</u> 26. Rear vault  <u>EG 3:</u> 1. Kip cast handstand 13. Free hip circle handstand  <u>EG 4:</u> None

# High Bar (cont)

Other Options	Future Skills	All NAIGC Exceptions
<p>NAIGC Exceptions:</p> <p>Front hip circle</p> <p><math>\frac{3}{4}</math> Back giant to support</p> <p><math>\frac{3}{4}</math> Front giant (to hop out)</p>	<p><u>EG 1:</u></p> <p>19. Pirouette</p> <p>14. Full pirouette to mixed grip (healy or full roll)</p> <p>37. Blind Change</p> <p><u>EG 2:</u></p> <p>20. Voronin</p> <p><u>EG 3:</u></p> <p>8. Weiler</p> <p>32. Endo</p> <p>44. Stalder</p> <p><u>EG 4:</u></p> <p>32. Double back tuck</p>	<p><u>A value (No Element Group):</u></p> <p>Back uprise to support</p> <p>Kip to support</p> <p>Back hip circle</p> <p>Free hip circle to horizontal</p> <p>Front hip circle</p> <p><math>\frac{3}{4}</math> Back giant to support</p> <p>Swing <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> turn</p> <p>Pull over</p> <p><math>\frac{3}{4}</math> Front giant (to hop out)</p> <p>Cast to horizontal</p> <p><u>A value:</u></p> <p>Tuck or pike salto, front or back (Element Group 4)</p> <p>Jam (Adler) to El grip below 90°(Element Group 3)</p> <p><u>B value:</u></p> <p>Jam (Adler) to El grip 45-90°(Element Group 3I)</p> <p><u>C value:</u></p> <p>Jam (Adler) to El grip 0-45°(Element Group 3)</p>

## Routines

V = Value | EG = Element Group | SV = Start Value

Routine A			Routine B			Routine C		
Skill	V	EG	Skill	V	EG	Skill	V	EG
Pull over	A	-	Pull over	A	-	Pull over	A	-
Cast to horizontal	A	-	Cast to horizontal	A	-	Free hip to horizontal	A	-
Back hip circle	A	-	Back hip circle	A	-	Extra Swing	-	-
Underbar swing	-	-	Underbar swing	-	-	Kip to support	A	-
Swing $\frac{1}{2}$ turn	A	-	Swing $\frac{1}{2}$ turn	A	-	Cast to horizontal	A	-
Extra swing	-	-	Extra swing	-	-	Back giant	A	1
Back tuck	A	4	Kip to support	A	-	Back layout	A	4
SV=10.0 (+0.5 for skills, +0.5 for EG -1.0 for only 5 skills)			Underbar swing	-	-	SV=11.6		
			Back layout	A	4			
			SV=11.1					